



**BRIEFING: APRIL 21, 2016 BOARD MEETING AGENDA ITEM #5**

**TO:** Chairman Richard and Board Members

**FROM:** Ben Tripousis, Northern California Regional Director

**DATE:** April 21, 2016

**RE:** Update on the San Jose to Merced Project Section

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**Background**

The San Jose to Merced Project Section is part of Phase I of the California High-Speed Rail System providing a critical rail link between the Silicon Valley and the Central Valley.

The approximately 84-mile Project Section will travel between stations in San Jose and Gilroy and (after passing through the Central Valley Wye) north to Merced and south to Fresno. The focus of the San Jose to Merced Project Section is the area between San Jose and the Central Valley Wye, given that the Central Valley Wye alignment and alignment connections to Merced and Fresno are part of the Merced to Fresno Section.

Alignment alternatives have been developed since 2010 and have been presented to the Board in a 2011 Supplemental Alternatives Analysis (SAA). These include an aerial alignment alternative through the City of San Jose and two alternative station locations in the City of Gilroy. These alignment alternatives achieved resource agency concurrence in September 2014 to carry forward for full environmental study.

This is an information item only. Staff work efforts on this Project Section are being presented to the Board for its information, but no Board action is involved at this time.

**Discussion**

The Authority continues to advance planning, environmental review and preliminary engineering for the San Jose to Merced Project Section. In November 2015, HNTB was selected to advance and complete the environmental and engineering work necessary for an environmental document for this section.

Along with the previously analyzed alignment alternatives (outlined in the 2011 SAA) three additional alternatives have been included for evaluation. These include:

- A blended at-grade alignment through the San Jose Station.
- A separate viaduct (elevated guideway) alternative along Monterey Highway between Gilroy and San Jose.
- A deeper tunnel alternative through the Pacheco Pass.

These alternatives are aimed at reducing the overall cost of the program, reducing impacts to the local community, and improving the operations of the statewide system.

We are also continuing our community integration efforts in support of the environmental review process. We are accomplishing this, in part, by forming Technical Working Groups and Community Working Groups, which will include stakeholders from each city as well as from Santa Clara and Merced counties. We are also working to schedule regular updates to local City Councils and Boards of Supervisors throughout the environmental review process. Community open houses are being scheduled in the coming weeks to provide an update to the communities and receive feedback on alignment alternatives and station locations.

Currently, the draft of this Project Section's environmental document is anticipated for release in early 2017. The release of the draft environmental document will be accompanied by public meetings as well as agency and public comment as required. Throughout this process comments from the public are collected and used, in conjunction with resource agency comments and technical studies, to support the development of the alternatives and ultimately the selection of a preferred alignment alternative.

### **Next Steps**

- Complete technical studies on the range of alignment alternatives and prepare draft environmental document.
- Engage regulatory agency partners, stakeholders, and the community during the preparation of the technical studies and environmental documentation to support work activities.

### **Attachments**

– San Jose to Merced Project Section Map

## Exhibit 1. San Jose to Merced Project Section Map

